

Tel Conversation Mort Halperin  
March 2, 2007  
4:10PM

[Mort has had the flu for week and has not been out of the house and so is not totally on top of what's going on but has been focused on one issue, as follows:]

Mort agrees that stopping an attack on Iran is of highest priority and that there is a straightforward way to do this, which is to some extent underway but which can be helped by outside pressure, specifically on Pelosi and Murtha.

He says that about two weeks ago, Murtha announced that he would introduce into the Defense Appropriations Sub-Committee of the House a provision in the supplemental bill for spending that 'no money appropriated under this bill or any other may be expended on military operations on or over Iran unless subsequent to the passage to this legislation, Congress would have authorized to do so.'

Murtha announced that he was going to introduce such a provision and Pelosi immediately said that she would support it. However, in the subsequent two weeks each of them have stopped talking about this issue, and Mort does not know why. It may be that they are simply trying to figure how best to do this or for some reason backed off from this, but they both indicated that they were in support of this.

*Get*  
The Open Society Policy Center, with which Mort is associated, has circulated a sign-on letter, signed by many groups, urging support for such legislation. They have sent this letter to every member of the Defense Appropriations Sub-Committee, asking each member to be willing to introduce such legislation if it has not already been done. Mort is very optimistic that this will pass the subcommittee and the full committee, and he is sure that it would be sustained on the floor of the House.

It's better to start with the House which first deals with this supplemental because then it would almost surely be sustained in the Senate and be in the bill. There probably are Senators who would initiate such legislation, but it should start in the House. The president could veto this bill but at the cost of

having no money to continue the war, since that is part of the supplemental bill.

This is very much preferable to the free-standing resolution introduced by Lee, Woolsey, Conyers, and Waters, which cuts off funding, which Mort said would never get passed in the House; and that resolutions not tied to funding like DeFazio's are not worth much at all. *E*

*in Jones'* Mort thinks that resolutions related to *limiting funding or cutting off funding for Iraq* funding (or not) will get nowhere in Congress. All this talking-- funding or no funding in Iraq-- will not have any effect. But it's Iran that can be prevented and is *imminent*, whereas Iraq at this point cannot be affected. And moreover, Iran is the immediate concern.

On the question of when Murtha and Pelosi spoke, he suggested I contact Amitay at OSI.

He thought there was about a 50% chance of Congress passing this; it is that low because of the silence in the past 2 weeks. He still thinks there is a 50% chance and suggests that the most effective thing to do is to bring pressure on Pelosi who can introduce this into the bill, along with Murtha and any *subcommittee* member. But he says if Pelosi backs it, it will pass the committee and the House. I would have thought that it was unpromising but he said, 'no...' That's very promising.

*He's said, 'we're not blowing an attack of the vote'* I asked what do you think the odds were in the absence-- if they didn't pass *this is no situation, it would be a disaster* it-- that the President would attack? He said 20%. I said, 'why so low?' and he said, 'Gates is dead set against it.' I said, 'Well, how does one know that he isn't just blowing smoke for the administration?' He said, this was *his* *Waters'* earlier position and there was no *reason why to doubt it*.

*seems he had changed as of the time* He had not heard that Rice is against it, but he said that he wouldn't be surprised--as well as Hadley, the army and navy. That leaves the air force...

How about hearings? I asked. *(Kam Harris: not now)*

He has been focused in the past 2 weeks on the supplemental and he didn't think that hearings would accomplish much. I said, 'What if armed services got the army and navy to testify?' He said, 'well, that would be good.' I think that he just hasn't thought much about it. Many of these points were



not pursued because Mort who has the flu was audibly run<sup>ing</sup> down and we didn't get far. So there are other questions.

Tom's addition:

The complicated thing with this is that UPJ, no matter what the votes are, are going to urge people to vote against the supplemental and I'm 100% certain they won't move on that even though they are concerned with Iran.

DE: In agreement of the bill [cut off funds to Iraq] so that it is on the record. But that is precisely the bill that the Republicans were trying to get voted on a few weeks ago and what the Democrats were dodging. They don't want to vote on the bill because they don't want to reveal how low support for that is at this point.

Tom: I thought it was different. They don't want to be perceived as cutting off the funds for the troops.

They don't want any Democrats on the record on cutting off funds for the troops...

DE: Same thing...If that could pass, I would still say Iran has higher priority. But if that would pass, I would be for it for sure. You could pass Iran as a free-standing bill if you could cut-off that [Iraq funding/withdrawal].

The peace movement can say, you can vote against the supplemental and for no attack on Iran... My only concern is that the provision goes on with the supplemental and gets passed. My impression is that nothing can impact Iraq at this point.

Tom: That is what they'll do: encourage not to vote on supplemental — take a stance against more funding of Iraq and against attack on Iran.

DE: They will refrain from telling people not to vote for this bill; but this won't effect it passing. If there is an effect on Iran, it won't be through the peace movement but those who are exerting pressure on Pelosi and Murtha.

I don't see any problem of getting people with conceivable influence on Pelosi and other members of the committee to ensure that this is on the supplemental. They are even backing off of cutting funding from Iraq and I have an unease about that—I don't think Congress can go far in affecting strategy of war...

Mort agrees with Scott Ritter that the president and Cheney believe, amazingly, that a decapitating strike against the theocratic regime in Iran would bring about a favorable regime change and that this is why they are determined to attack. Mort has believed this for the past two years.